



UGANDA TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY  
**UTAMU**

## UGANDA TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY (UTAMU)

### OPEN DISTANCE E-LEARNING (ODEL) POLICY

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL ON 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020.**

  
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Chairperson, University Council

  
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Secretary, University Council

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU) seeks to train high-quality human resources in the areas of management, science and technology for Uganda and the region. Furthermore, the University seeks to conduct research, consultancy, knowledge transfer partnerships, and business incubation in management, science, and technology to contribute to the economic development of Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa region.

Uganda Technology and Management University has established a policy on Open Distance and e-learning (ODEL) that will be implemented to guide the ODEL usage so that students achieve the expected course outcomes. The University is committed to enhancing quality flexible learning, which must be consistent with its strategic priorities, such as increased use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, flexible modes of learning and cost-effectiveness of courses and that would lead the University towards the realization of its Vision and Mission.

**The Vision** of Uganda Technology and Management University is "To be a global educational institution for management, science, technology and innovation" and

**The Mission** of the University is "To provide global quality education, research and innovation critical to economic and human development.

ODEL comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching. Whether networked learning or not, the information and communication systems serve as specific media to implement the learning process. ODEL is essentially the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. ODEL applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or videotape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in text, image, animation, streaming video and audio.

Concerning the above context, the University has established a policy on ODEL that will be implemented to guide the ODEL resources' usage so that students achieve the expected course outcomes. The University is committed to enhancing quality flexible learning, which has to be consistent with its strategic priorities, such as increased use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, flexible modes of learning and cost-effectiveness of courses. As part of this commitment, the Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for Academic Affairs has responsibility for pedagogical leadership, coordination and alignment of the pedagogical and technical dimensions of ODEL and stakeholders' liaison.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

The University will use ODEL where appropriate to support the achievement of its goals which are in line with the National Council of Higher Education policy in providing ODEL experiences that are flexible, responsive, and effective and meet the needs of all its learners and partners.

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Policy aspects pertaining to ODEL will, where relevant, be embedded in all University policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and corporate/integrated approach to associated systems, processes, and responsibilities.

For the ODEL to be effective and efficient, a student is expected to have access to all required materials/resources to meet the course's learning outcomes, including the expertise.

Here, the word course is intended to cover both awards formal and informal courses at any level of granularity. Where an offering provides ODEL components or content on which the achievement of the learning outcomes is NOT dependent, it does not fall within the scope of this policy. Still, such provision is subject to the requirements of the University relating to electronic learning content, including its provenance, quality, and management.

### **3. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

In due respect to the University strategies on the provision of quality education for all, UTAMU envisages an e/learning vision that can be attained in collaboration with different stakeholders (students, academic staff, management, and government). ODEL may be referred to as the use of electronic information and communication technologies to enhance teaching and learning effectively. There are key activities that will need to be realized by UTAMU on the implementation of the policy. These include:

Fostering students from all sectors and communities by enabling them to attain their learning goals through a flexible, effective, and ubiquitous teaching and learning community, equip students with relevant ICT skills necessary for the industry through practical delivery methods and respond to students' and market drivers.

UTAMU will undertake the role of making sure that all its programs are effectively enhanced through teaching approaches that utilize e.learning. These approaches used by academic staff will be critically reviewed to conform to utilization of technologies for teaching and learning. Irrespective of the embedded technologies, teachers and learners should be able to attain educational objectives that suit innovations, employability and increase maturity in self-paced learning.

### **4. VISION STATEMENT**

The ODEL policy strives to realize the following vision:

*Effectively enhance the teacher to student teaching and learning experience, through the improvement of management and support of e-learning, by providing the opportunity to utilize the flexibility, accessibility and ubiquitous nature of the educational environment that focuses on the needs of both the teacher and learner.*



## 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The main objective of this policy is to facilitate and support ODEL using information and communication technologies by guiding and coordinating all the stakeholders within and outside the University.

Described below are the specific objectives of the policy.

- 5.1 To use current and emerging flexible technologies to enrich ODEL experiences to demonstrate added value for students and cost-effectiveness. To achieve this, the University desires to adopt the new emerging technologies to upkeep with the ongoing technological advancement in its operational areas, including ODEL.
- 5.2 To develop courses and units that are consistent with strategic planning and are pedagogically appropriate and cost-effective. The University has experienced skilled teaching staff capable of developing courses and units. They do these in collaboration with other stakeholders, but they also follow the University's strategic planning.
- 5.3 To adopt University-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies for teaching and learning, including planning, design and development, implementation, evaluation, feedback, and revision.  
The University will achieve this specific objective through the unit of quality assurance, whereby the set standards will be used as the base to assess the quality of the resources used in ODEL.
- 5.4 To support the professional learning of staff in using current and emerging flexible technologies and support students to develop the abilities to use current and emerging flexible technologies to enhance their learning experiences. Technical support and teaching staff are enabled (conducive environment). They efficiently and effectively support students in their needs to use the available technologies to make their studies smooth.
- 5.5 To take a national lead in offering learning opportunities to all those who can benefit at a range of levels and in a variety of modes to suit individual needs. The University achieves this specific objective by observing gender balance and marginalized groups to ensure that students from all communities have an equal chance of studying at UTAMU.
- 5.6 To play a leadership role in the cultural, social, economic, and intellectual life of the local, regional, and wider communities we serve and are known for our expertise in supporting economic and social regeneration.  
The University has been doing this; it's only going to extend the same to ODEL as one of its new services.
- 5.7 Promote the development and deployment of inclusive digital technologies and services.  
The University will Ensure that all ICT services, ODEL materials & content are delivered in multiple formats to address varying needs by persons with disabilities (PWD).

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## 6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

**Principle 1:** The University ensures that its ODEL courses match the curriculum. The pedagogy is matched with and aligned to the appropriate Uganda National Council of Higher Education guidelines through clear objectives (at an appropriate level and form of specification), the relevance of content covered, the appropriateness of student activities, the nature of the assessment.

**Principle 2:** The University ensures that the pedagogy engages and motivates learners. This engagement is evident in an ethos of being motivating, such that it is both enjoyable for learners and makes them want to continue using ICT or want to carry on with learning the topic, such that it does not produce adverse emotional reactions that are likely to cause reduced motivation to learn in general, or to use ICT.

**Principle 3:** The University ensures that students taking ODEL courses have a formative assessment. The University provides formative assessment, i.e., assessment that is primarily aimed at improving learning. This may be achieved in several ways:

- (i) by providing rapid feedback that helps learners to see how they can improve and what they must do to improve.
- (ii) by providing opportunities for peer assessment, with an appropriate understanding of the criteria or standards of performance required.
- (iii) By providing opportunities for self-assessment, with appropriate understanding of the criteria or standards of performance required.

**Principle 4:** The University ensures that ODEL courses have coherence, consistency, and transparency.

The courses are internally coherent and consistent in how the objectives, content, student activity, and assessment match each other. It is open and accessible in its design.

**Principle 5:** The University ensures that its ODEL provision can meet the needs of a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences. This includes on and off-campus learners in local, regional, national, and international settings and cover both blended and fully ODEL courses ranging from full awards to informal and individual learning.

**Principle 6:** The University ensures that students taking ODEL courses have equity of opportunity with those taking courses delivered in more traditional ways and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures, and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the ODEL Learner.

**Principle 7:** The University continually works towards ensuring that all systems, both manual and electronic, used in the ODEL context interoperate in the most effective ways to provide learners with a practical and increasingly individualized learning environment encompassing all aspects of their experience as a student at the University, as part of a holistic Managed Environment for Learners.

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**Principle 8:** The University exploits the range of technologies used in the ODEL context to work with partner organizations, employers, and individuals to meet its goals of supporting the independent and lifelong learner and continuing professional development.

**Principle 9:** The University, through its quality processes, ensures that ODEL provision meets the standards expected by the University, funding bodies and relevant legislation and that it is accessible, educationally sound, engaging, and appropriate to its target populations, whilst ensuring that course developers and those facilitating learning have the scope to innovate and fully employ their professional skills and judgments.

**Principle 10:** The University ensures that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of ODEL offerings is both competitive and appropriate to the target populations.

**Principle 11:** The university ensures that ODEL is accessed and utilized among persons with disabilities hence reducing their marginalization and creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

## **7. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICIES/DOCUMENTS**

ODEL demands closer working relationships between academic units and the institution's administrative and operational divisions. School and departmental plans indicate the demands on services provided by other departments. Discussions on variations that may be needed to standard institutional services should be identified in departmental planning, and plans should allow appropriate time scales to resolve difficulties.

The implementation of this policy will be along with the following policies:

### **7.1 Policy on Infrastructure:**

Introducing an ODEL program imposes new requirements for the institution to provide online administrative services and a technical infrastructure designed to provide secure services accessed by users operating outside an institutional firewall. New infrastructure has been put in place, and only designated persons will be authorized to have access and provide support as described below:

### **7.2 Technical Assistance**

The following personnel will provide technical assistance for ODEL staff and users at the three main stages, i.e., production, delivery, and access.

**Production:** Media Specialists consisting of ODEL specialists, Graphic Designers, Web Designers and Editors

**Delivery:** IT Specialists

**Access:** IT Helpdesk Officers

**See Appendix A for the description of the above-named technical personnel.**

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### **7.3 Software/Hardware**

The University will provide software and hardware options suitable for ODEL users where possible.

The software for learning will include the following.

- Learning Management System (LMS), a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, and reporting of training programs, classroom, and online events, ODEL programs, and training content.
- Video Conferencing Software, to enable online communication for audio classes, video classes, and seminars, with built-in features such as chat, screen sharing, and recording.
- Plagiarism software, to detect and report on duplication of content from several internet sources. This is to ensure that written work/submissions by students shall follow the guidelines for academic honesty, copyright, and intellectual property policies.

### **7.4 IT Network Management and Infrastructure**

The University provides sufficient internet bandwidth, facilitating improved and efficient access throughout the university campus.

The University works with internet service providers to provide students access to ODEL resources at zero-costs

In addition, UTAMU provides a more efficient intranet system with broader coverage within the university territory, including the non-residential student areas, to cut down on bandwidth usage using wireless technology. The local intranet will provide a platform for distributing ODEL materials to any student or School member who wish to use them. The IT network will support the LMS that shares selected materials on the World Wide Web. The practical implementation of the University's ICT policy will also augment this ODEL policy.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have the minimum technology requirements to complete online courses, including access to a computer and printer and not less than a DSL Internet connection. Students may check with the ICT Department to ensure that they have access to accessible technology.

### **7.5 Role of Communication Design, ICT Directorate and Library**

The University encourages teamwork approach to curriculum and materials development to bring together different kinds of expertise available across the University e.g., disciplinary, pedagogic, design, systems, ICT, etc.

### **7.6 Sharing**

UTAMU fosters open sharing of educational materials with other institutions if needed. This sharing policy mandates the placement of ODEL materials produced at the University on the

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UTAMU intranet and the complementary arrangement of UTAMU - developed materials on a similar site. This policy helps avoid duplicative efforts and expands the material base for all involved parties.

### **7.7 Policy on Virtual Mobility:**

Delivery of programs via ODEL offers new opportunities for achieving the objectives of student mobility programs through virtual mechanisms

### **7.8 Training and Capacity Building**

All staff of UTAMU will receive regular training for proficient development of ODEL Course Modules, delivery and management of course modules and management and facilitation of real-time student-faculty interaction.

Students will receive regular training for efficient use of real-time student-faculty interaction services

### **7.9 Delivering an ODEL Course**

All courses should be prepared for the LMS before the course begins, including clear student-faculty interaction strategies.

An ODEL Course shall begin with a Course Orientation. The course orientation should offer an overview of course components, instructional materials, and technologies, and UTAMU ODEL environment support resources. A well-structured orientation establishes the foundation and sets the tone for student-instructor communication for the entire semester.

#### **7.9.1 Written Assignment Requirements**

- (i) Written work includes formal research papers, business writing, technical writing, and journal entries.
- (ii) All written work shall follow the guidelines for academic honesty, copyright, and intellectual property policies.
- (iii) Students shall be encouraged to pre-check their submission for plagiarism before making the final submission.
- (iv) Only pdfs and mircrosoft word shall be allowed for submissions.
- (v) All written work shall be submitted through a plagiarism software, final submissions with a plagiarism score of at least 60% shall be flagged and maybe rejected at the discretion of the examiner.

#### **7.9.2 Attendance and Participation**

- (i) Students' attendance for ODEL courses requires at least one posting to the course module per month. One Month of missed attendance creates an automatic drop of course, and the instructor will submit an Instructor Initiated Withdrawal to the Registrar's office.
- (ii) Participation is separate from attendance requirements, which requires students to follow participation rules as stated by the instructor in the course syllabus.

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- (iii) Faculty/teaching staff participation and appropriate facilitation requires weekly posting of feedback to students.

## **8. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE POLICY.**

### **8.1 ODEL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

ODEL policy is not the only factor necessary for successful ODEL institutional adoption; "ODEL champions or innovators drive bottom up" change and early adopters is important, and pedagogical strategies that create a climate of collaboration can also drive organizational change.

The expression of senior leadership commitment, policy statements articulate the top management commitment and strategic ownership needed at the highest level for the uptake and rapid diffusion of ODEL in UTAMU.

This policy is not necessarily the driving force for change and ICT take-up. Still, it is also a response to on the ground activities which scale up across UTAMU schools/departments. In some ways, staff may consider themselves explicitly constrained in their ICT use by lack of institutional support and vision.

For smooth implementation, the following guidelines shall be reinforced:

#### **8.1.1 School**

The school that originates materials reserves the right to decide the conditions under which the material will be shared except in the following cases:

- (i) The material is specifically paid for or commissioned by the University, or the University provides an exceptional contribution, either financial or material. In this case, the University will determine the conditions under which the material will be shared.
- (ii) The material is developed because of a specific collaboration, in which case the guidelines governing that collaboration will prevail.

Materials produced which do not indicate any specific conditions for sharing will automatically be considered to have been shared according to UTAMU policies/regulations.

#### **8.1.2 Non-School Staff**

The University will own materials created by staff as part of their job responsibilities unless they are the creative force behind the work and/or have made a substantial intellectual contribution. In that case, the same guidelines that pertain to Schools shall apply.

#### **8.1.3 Students**

This policy presumes that students will not be creators of ODEL material. Students who assist with creating or producing ODEL material shall be acknowledged as collaborators. If students develop ODEL content as part of their university education, the authorship rights should fall to the University, but the students will be appropriately attributed.

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All students who register to study at UTAMU shall be required to have a laptop for use during the study. UTAMU will allow students to join its scheme to acquire a brand-new Internet-connected laptop at very minimal prices.

#### **8.1.4 A Policy Implementation Advisory Committee**

This committee will oversee the implementation of the ODEL policy and will report to the Senate through appropriate Senate Committee and University Management. The Group will oversee the development of an evaluation plan to assess the impact of the policy. Central to this will be a commitment to include feedback from students and staff on all aspects of ODEL.

##### **Terms of Reference**

1. Represent Schools' strategies and priorities concerning the implementation of ODEL Policy
2. Advise on the priority and nature of ODEL Policy implementation activities
3. Promote and disseminate ODEL Policy implementation
4. Advise on the ongoing development of University ODEL Policy

##### **Membership**

Representatives from the following areas of the University and its partner

- Two members of each School can represent the activities relating to the School's strategic focus, including course design and delivery, administration, quality, and the student experience.
- Student Office
- IT office

#### **8.1.5 ODEL Policy Implementation Acceptance Committee**

##### **Terms of Reference**

1. Consider the recommendations of the ODEL Policy Implementation Advisory committee concerning approval.
2. Make recommendations on the prioritization and implementation of approved developments.
3. Consider and assess University Plans and make recommendations for the consideration of the ODEL Policy Implementation Advisory Group concerning the ODEL policy development or implementation.
4. Consider and assess innovations in ODEL and make recommendations for the consideration of the ODEL Policy Implementation Advisory Group concerning the ODEL policy development or implementation.
5. Consider ODEL Policy developments on progression for ratification by Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee.

#### **8.2 ODEL POLICY EVALUATION.**

The University organizes a periodic exhibition of ODEL materials to facilitate innovation and motivation. This enhances the reputation of those who excel in ODEL implementation and makes their accomplishments more visible to the University. In addition, the University can

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promote the ODEL culture by organizing certificate-awarding advocacy seminars, hands-on workshops, etc., for School and staff.

University ODEL Policy and its implementation plan overtly address quality, including Quality processes and enhancement.

**TABLE 1: ODEL EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

Evaluation criteria	
Technical support to academic staff	Call center statistics and feedback from staff
Quality and excellence	a) QAA reports b) Professional body reports c) Subject review reports d) Publications c) Strategy and policy documents
IT reliability	a) Statistics of uptime b) Statistics of unscheduled downtime c) Student survey comments

As the research can inform future policy directives and help guide practice. The lecturer and student voices can help shape policy and steer ODEL activities.

Following are some of the research questions that can help in that:

- How can technologies support new forms of pedagogy?
- What is the relationship between technologies, physical and virtual spaces, and pedagogy?
- How do we take account of a digital divide that is ever narrower but deeper?
- What new digital literacy skills will learners and lecturers need?
- ODEL innovation will require a radical rethinking of the curriculum,
- ODEL challenges existing norms about assessment

## Appendix A: Description of Technical Assistance

### Production Stage Graphic Designer

The graphic designer (artist) will be a professional within the graphic design and graphic arts industry who assembles images, typography, or motion graphics to create a piece of design. The graphic designer will create the graphics primarily to be published for the UTAMU – ODEL project. They may also be responsible for typesetting, illustration, and web design. The core responsibility of the designer will be to present information in a way that is both accessible and aesthetic.

### Editor

The Editor is responsible for the digital production of the content concerning checking copyright issues and other digital publishing-related matters.

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### **Web Designer**

The Web designer designs presentation of content (usually hypertext or hypermedia) delivered to an end-user through the World Wide Web, by way of a Web browser or other Web-enabled software like Internet, television clients, micro blogging clients and RSS readers.

### **Delivery Stage IT Specialist**

The IT specialist is a multifaceted IT person who has knowledge of information systems and can apply several IT technologies, including software and web programming to deliver ODEL content as appropriate.

### **Access Stage IT Helpdesk Officers**

The IT Helpdesk Officers provide support for hardware and software issues related to the ODEL. They also handle phone support for the campus and help out with the general support of the other staff concerning the ODEL. The primary requirements for Helpdesk workers are to be good in interpersonal skills and a broad knowledge base on computing.

### **Appendix B: Scheme for Hardware and Software Procurement**

The success of ODEL is dependent mainly on the ability to disseminate and access the ODEL materials. This means the availability of computers and efficient and reliable network/internet connectivity. With the current student numbers at the University, it recommends the following:

- Although UTAMU follows through with its usual plans to continuously improve the number of computers for students, it is not saddled with the burden of acquiring extra computers solely for ODEL access. This also eliminates the need to maintain such machines so acquired.
- UTAMU negotiates with Computer or Software manufacturing Companies – not their agents – to supply laptops and PC computers or software with basic specifications to students and staff at much-reduced prices for educational purposes (most of the manufacturing companies have special prices for academic institutions, and UTAMU takes advantage of such arrangements. UTAMU petitions the Ministry of Education to allow such computers to come into the country as duty-free educational materials, to reduce further the cost for students and staff of UTAMU who wish to acquire a computer or software to be able to pursue their education using ODEL

## **9. APPROVAL**

The Uganda Technology and Management University's Human Resource Manual and staff regulations have been authorised and approved by the University Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Day of April 2022.



CHAIRPERSON, UNIVERSITY COUNCIL



SECRETARY, UNIVERSITY COUNCIL